

Emphases of the Fourth Grade Assessment in the Diocese of La Crosse

God's Plan of Salvation History

What is Salvation History? Salvation History is the story of God's love for us: how God created man and woman in the beginning; how Adam and Eve rejected God through disobedience (original sin) and how God, in His infinite love for us, sent His Son (Jesus Christ – 2nd Person of the Blessed Trinity) to rescue us from sin, and reunite us with Himself (salvation). The story of how this happened is called the *story of our salvation*, or God's Plan of Salvation History. The following is a summary of this story – all the wonderful works that God has done out of love for us.

I. The Blessed Trinity

God is One in Three Persons (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit); A “Trinity” of Persons of total, self-giving love.

II. Creation

God created man and woman in His image and likeness. He created them to be one (in communion) with Him. Adam & Eve shared in God's Divine life. (CCC 375)

III. The Fall of Adam & Eve

Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. The first sin of Adam and Eve (Original Sin) separated them from God. Adam and Eve, and all their descendants, could not share in God's Divine Life. God alone could fix the problem of sin, and reunite mankind with Himself.

IV. The Incarnation

God the Son (the 2nd Person of the Trinity) became man to reunite God and man/woman.

V. Redemption

After three years of public ministry Jesus suffered, was crucified and died so that our sins could be forgiven. On the third day He rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven. By His sacrifice on the cross we were now able to again share in God's Divine Life (receive sanctifying grace in our souls) (cf. 2 Peter 1:4).

VI. The Holy Spirit at Pentecost

After Jesus ascended to Heaven, He sent God the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and Mary. The Apostles were strengthened to dispense the seven Sacraments and the teachings of Christ. The Catholic Church, therefore, is a divine institution that was founded by Christ.

VII. The Church

Jesus established a Church (the Catholic Church), founded on the 12 Apostles with Peter as the head whose mission is to teach and sanctify (to make holy) all of humanity. Through the Church we receive the seven Sacraments and the teachings of Jesus Christ, guarded and protected by the Holy Spirit through the teaching authority or *Magisterium* of the Church. The gift of the *Magisterium* (the pope and the bishops) assures us that the teachings of the Church today are the teachings Jesus gave to the Apostles two thousand years ago.

VIII. The Sacraments

It is through the seven sacraments of the Church that we receive a share in God's Divine life (sanctifying grace within our soul). Sanctifying grace gives us the supernatural strength to be faithful to Jesus Christ by living according to His teachings as summed up in the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.

The Apostles' Creed

I. The Blessed Trinity

The mystery of the Blessed Trinity is One God in Three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus is God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. In order to save us from sin, Jesus assumed a human nature and became a man. This is called the Incarnation.

We can know that God exists through our human reason but for us to love Him, God had to reveal many things about Himself to us through the prophets. God most fully revealed Himself to us through His Son, Jesus. Jesus told us about the Father and the Holy Spirit. He taught us to pray, and how to live the Christian life.

II. Jesus Christ

Jesus reveals God to us because He is God. Jesus shows us what God is like: gentle and just, slow to anger, rich in mercy, and full of love. He came to us as our Teacher and Savior. By accepting death on the cross, Jesus continued His perfect obedience and service to the end so we could be obedient and offer our service to God. He showed us how to act and gave us the ability to act like Him through our receiving grace.

III. Creation

God created the world and all the creatures in it. God created the angels who are also persons without bodies. Angels are pure spirits. Furthermore, God created man and woman in His own image and likeness. God created Adam and Eve and they were united with Him by sharing in His Divine Life. As images of God, Adam and Eve could think and love.

III. Mary

God created Mary without the stain of original sin so that she could be the Mother of the Savior. Mary is the Mother of Jesus and Jesus is God. Therefore, we rightly call Mary the Mother of God. We venerate Mary in her highest honor as Mother of God.

IV. The Catholic Church

Jesus chose twelve men and taught them all the mysteries of His Kingdom (Matthew 13:11). He formed them to be the leaders of the Catholic Church, the only Church that He started. Out of the twelve men, Jesus chose Peter to be the head and he became the first pope. The Apostles were Jesus' close followers but in their weakness, they even betrayed Him. However, at Pentecost after Jesus had ascended back to Heaven, the Apostles were strengthened by God the Holy Spirit to do all that Jesus had commanded them. Therefore, we can rightly say that the Catholic Church is a divine institution, because it was started by Christ and was publicly manifested after the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles.

As the Church began to increase in number and the Apostles began to die, successors were appointed. They are called bishops with the Pope as the head. Each bishop in the world can trace his line back to the original twelve. (Judas was replaced by Matthias in Acts 1:15-26)

V. The Dignity of the Human Person

Each person is created with a body and a soul. Our immortal soul allows us to know and love. God gave this to us so we would know and love Him. By the power of knowing and loving God, we have a special worth over other earthly creatures. This worth is called "dignity."

The Sacraments

Jesus instituted the seven Sacraments, which are sacred signs that give us sanctifying grace within our soul (a share in God's Divine life). The seven Sacraments are Baptism, Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, Holy Orders, Matrimony, Anointing of the Sick.

I. The Sacrament of Baptism

In the Sacrament of Baptism, we are cleansed of original sin, we become a child of God and a member of God's Family, the Church. At Baptism, we are given the three Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity (love). These supernatural gifts allow us to believe in God, trust in His promises in the Bible and love God and our neighbor. A virtue is a good habit. We grow in the virtue of faith, for example through prayer and making acts of faith. The word theological means that the gifts of faith, hope and charity are given to us by God and He gives them to us to live in friendship with the Blessed Trinity. (CCC 1812-1813)

Through Baptism, we come to know and love God by "faith" and "charity." Baptism gives us a new "dignity" (worth) as adopted sons and daughters of God.

II. The Sacrament of Reconciliation – a Sacrament of Healing

Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation Jesus wants to free us from our sins of selfishness that we commit after Baptism. Jesus gave the Apostles the power to forgive sins on Easter Sunday night (John 20: 19-22). This power of Christ has been handed on to all ordained priests. The steps to making a good confession include a) praying for the grace to know our sins and to be sorry for our sins b) examining our conscience and making up our mind to cooperate with God's grace to not commit these sins again c) confessing our sins d) receiving absolution and e) praying the assigned penance. In order to receive forgiveness for our sins, we must be truly sorry for our sins, make a firm commitment not to sin again and confess our sins to a priest.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation gives us the strength to break sinful habits, to forgive someone who has hurt us and to be more faithful in following Christ. People are guilty of sin when they knowingly and freely choose to do what is wrong. Sins are acts of selfishness. We do not sin when we do something wrong by mistake or we feel tempted to do what is wrong. Daily prayer and the grace of the Sacraments helps us to resist temptations.

III. The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist

Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper (Mt. 26: 26-30; Mk. 14: 22-26; Lk 22: 14-20). The two major parts of the Mass are the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In the Liturgy of the Word, there are three readings from the Bible. The first reading is from the Old Testament, the second reading is usually from the letters of St. Paul and the third reading is from one of the four Gospels, which relate the life and words of Jesus. After the first reading, we respond to God's Word by praying a Psalm from the Old Testament. From listening to God's Word at Mass, we receive guidance in making good decisions, we come to know better how much God loves us and we are given direction on how to follow Jesus more closely. In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, after the priest prays the words of Jesus, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus (transubstantiation – religious terminology should be used with explanation. Accountability will come later). We are able to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, entering into immediate communion with God Himself! At the time we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, it is our closest union with Him on earth. We want to be totally focused on Him in our prayer.

IV. The Sacrament of Confirmation

In the Sacrament of Confirmation, our relationship with the Holy Spirit is deepened. The Holy Spirit strengthens in the person the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (wisdom, fortitude, knowledge, fear of the Lord, understanding, right counsel, piety) that were received in Baptism. These supernatural Gifts are strengthened so that we can become a disciple of Jesus Christ in witnessing to the Faith and serving Christ by serving our neighbor. (CCC 1302-1305)

V. The Sacrament of Holy Orders

A man is ordained a priest in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Only a priest can forgive sins through the power of Christ and celebrate the Holy Eucharist. At Mass, the priest prays the words of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus.

VI. The Sacrament of Matrimony

In the Sacrament of Matrimony, God Himself establishes a marriage bond between the husband and wife and this is for life. Jesus gives the couple sanctifying grace to strengthen their love for each other, to forgive each other and to help each other grow in holiness.

VII. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is for the Christian experiencing the difficulties of serious illness, old age or danger of death.

VIII. The Liturgical Year

The liturgical year is a celebration of the life of Christ, and certain days are in honor of Mary and the saints. The liturgical year begins with Advent, the four weeks in preparation of the birth of Christ our Savior on Christmas. Advent is a time of penance as we die to selfishness and sin in order to prepare for the coming of Jesus. After Epiphany (the coming of the Wise Men) and the Baptism of Jesus, we celebrate Ordinary Time, focusing on the teachings and miracles of Jesus and it is recognized by the color green. Lent is the forty days of prayer, fasting and almsgiving in which we seek to gain control of our desires by making sacrifices. We want to become less attached to worldly things so that we are free to grow in our relationship with Jesus. Purple is worn during Lent, symbolizing penance. The Paschal Mystery, the mystery of the suffering, death, and Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, is celebrated during the Sacred Triduum: Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. We call Holy Saturday the Easter Vigil. Forty days later, we celebrate the Ascension of Jesus into Heaven. Ten days later, the Church rejoices with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the public manifestation of the Church. From Pentecost to Advent, Ordinary Time is celebrated and we again focus on what Jesus did and taught.

The Moral Life

I. The Ten Commandments

God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are God's laws of love, the rules that help us know how to live to stay close to Him. Those who want to be faithful to Jesus show their love for Him by following His commandments. (John 14:15). Students should memorize the Ten Commandments. Jesus summed up the Ten Commandments in the two Great Commandments: Love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.

II. The Christian Life – Faith, Hope and Charity

It is always necessary that our faith and hope in Jesus continue to grow. Our charity toward our neighbor will then also grow. God will strengthen the Theological Virtues of faith, hope and charity in us if we ask Him in prayer. Furthermore, we grow in the virtues through repeated acts of faith, hope and charity. The Christian life is a life of faith, hope and charity.

III. Vocations

God knows and loves each person. God calls each person by name and has a special plan for his/ her life (Isaiah 43:1). Every Christian is called by God to be holy, to love and serve God and his/her neighbor with the help of His grace. Each person is invited to a personal friendship with Jesus Christ (CCC 1604).

God has given each person unique talents and gifts. From the moment of Baptism, God has a special plan for each person to use these gifts in the service of others and the building of His Kingdom. The call from God is a vocation. This special plan for our life will bring us the greatest joy and peace.

IV. Mortal and Venial Sin

We commit sin when we are disobedient to God by breaking His laws of love. Due to the effects of original sin, we are weak in our ability to resist sin (We have a weakened human nature.) (CCC 405, 1264) We are tempted to sin through our own selfish desires, through the influence of others, the culture, the media etc (usually referred to as “the world”) and Satan, “the father of lies” (John 8:44). The Holy Spirit helps us to resist temptation and to make good choices as we follow Jesus.

There are good (virtuous) and bad (sinful) choices. Right choices are the way that we love God, others and ourselves. Sinful choices are acts of selfishness. Sins wound us personally as well as in our love for God and others. There are two types of sin: mortal (deadly) and venial sins (CCC 1855). Mortal sin is a very serious sin (such as saying hateful things against God (blasphemy), using God’s name in vain, failing to attend Mass due to our own fault). When someone commits mortal sin, he destroys his love for God by losing sanctifying grace within the soul, which is a share in God’s Divine life. Mortal sin blinds us to the truth and it results in the loss of charity. Mortal sin must be confessed in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. If we die in unrepented mortal sin, we cannot ever be united with God in Heaven. For an act to be a mortal sin, it must be a very serious matter, the person must have full knowledge that it is serious and then freely make the choice to sin. A person who commits a mortal sin should not receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist until he/she goes to confession, receiving forgiveness and healing, by which the person is reunited with Jesus (CCC 1857-1859, 1861, 1415).

Venial sin wounds but does not destroy our love for God by breaking a commandment in a less serious matter. However, all sin is serious because sin offends God. Venial sin weakens charity, love of God and neighbor, and impedes the soul’s progress in the exercise of virtues (good habits) and the practice of the moral good. Unrepented venial sin disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin. Examples of less sinful actions include being unkind to someone, not obeying parents immediately and being lazy with homework.

Our Prayer Life

I. Prayer

Prayer is lifting up our minds and hearts to God – listening and talking with God in order to develop and continue to deepen our love for Him. Prayer is a gift from God. We need

to pray every day in order to stay close to Jesus: remembering that He has given us everything, thanking Him and asking Him for what we need. Jesus will also help us in making decisions and guide us to see what we did well and what can be done better to avoid occasions of sin.

We are able to grow in our friendship with Jesus through daily prayer. As we come to know Him better, our love for Him increases which leads to a deeper commitment to serve Him by serving others.

II. The Mass

The Mass is the highest form of prayer. It is the most visible sign of our being in God's Holy Presence because the Mass makes present for us the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. God asks us (in the Ten Commandments) to attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation because He knows that we need His help that we receive in the Sacraments to live the Christian life. Students should know the Holy Days. We need to participate fully in mind and heart in the prayers and songs of the Sunday Mass. We are to fast one hour before receiving communion. This includes fasting from gum and candy.

III. The Our Father and Glory Be

Jesus taught the Apostles the Our Father. It is important that we do not simply repeat a formula mechanically, but pray the words that express to the Father everything that we need. In this regard, the Holy Spirit continues to teach us how to pray and helps us to pray with our heart when we ask for His assistance.

The "Glory Be to the Father" is a prayer in which we give praise to the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Students should know the mysteries of Christ's life that we meditate upon while praying the Holy Rosary. The Mysteries help us to know how Jesus responded to different situations in life.

Sacred Scripture

I. The Old Testament

The Old Testament begins with God creating everything out of nothing and out of Divine love. By Original Sin, Adam and Eve separated themselves from God. The Old Testament is the history of the people waiting for the Savior to reunite them with God. The people of the Old Testament were not able to be faithful to God over any long period of time due to the effects of the Original Sin. They did not have sanctifying grace within their soul (a participation in God's life). Jesus had not yet reconciled the world with the Father through His suffering, death and Resurrection. Finally, at the end of the Old Testament, the Chosen People realized they needed a Savior and so our ancestors were ready for Jesus to come.

II. The New Testament

The Bible is the written Word of God. The Church considers the heart of the Bible to be the four Gospels. The four Gospels present us with the life of Jesus our Savior, who came to gather all people into the "family of God," the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Jesus was carrying out the Father's will to bring us back into communion with Himself through the Church.

Jesus began the Catholic Church by choosing twelve Apostles, revealing to them what we need to know to love Him, specifically the truths about being His faithful followers. Jesus instituted the seven Sacraments, the way that we receive sanctifying grace within our soul, a share in God's Divine Life. It was, above all, through His Death on the Cross and His Resurrection that He accomplished the coming of His Kingdom (CCC 541-542). Each person is called to union with Christ in and through His Church.